

CRASC Technical Committee Meeting Minutes
Turners Falls, Massachusetts
January 8, 2003

1. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes from the Meeting on October 9, 2002

Mr. Jay McMenemy, Technical Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:17 a.m. and adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

There were no representatives present from the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries nor the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. Connecticut employees remain under severe travel restrictions because of state budget concerns.

Mr. David MacDuffee was introduced as the new representative to the Technical Committee from the National Marine Fisheries Service.

The Minutes from the October 9 meeting were approved.

2. Fish Culture Subcommittee Update

Mr. Ken Gillette reported that the Program produced 11.7 million green eggs in 2002 including 181K sea-run eggs, 10.8M domestic eggs, and 750K kelt eggs [table attached]. Production exceeded projections. The agreement between the USFWS and USFS to fund seasonal assistance with egg handling at the White River NFH has not been finalized but is in process.

Mr. Gabe Gries advised the Committee that the Warren SFH cannot control incubation temperatures. Fry are, as a consequence, expected to be ready for release in late March/early April, so NHFG plans to feed the fry brine shrimp prior to release. Mr. Gries will check with Ms. Trish Barbash to confirm necessary fish health sampling protocols for the fry.

Mr. McMenemy indicated that the marked fry would be distributed this coming spring in the same way as last year, details to be finalized at the March pre-stocking meeting. Approximately 90,000 3-4 fish/pound, clipped and vaccinated smolts will be stocked in the Farmington, mainstem Connecticut River and Westfield River (below DSI) in April. CTDEP, MAFW and NHFG will haul the smolts to the release sites. The stocking details will be finalized later.

Mr. Mickey Novak reminded everyone that a cryopreservation study was undertaken this year with results to be presented at the CRASC Forum.

The White River NFH has approximately 750 surplus, PIT-tagged brood stock available. The Technical Committee approved two requests: the RCNSS requested 150 brood stock to continue research and to spawn for school programs; and, the RIFW requested brood stock from the North Attleboro NFH for angler releases. That hatchery plans to keep those brood stock but RIFW can have up to 500 fish from the WRNFH.

3. Fish Passage Subcommittee Update

Mr. John Warner provided the following report:

HYDRO LICENSING

Holyoke Project

- Progress on implementing new license fish passage requirements continues.
- Designs of the new upstream passage facilities including new lifts, flume, and trapping facilities have been commented on.
- Some in-water preliminary work on lifts, work on retaining walls to operate at 40,000 cfs and installation of a new west-side/Unit 2 tailrace fishway entrance gate top be done in summer 2003.
- Eel upstream passage evaluations in 2003 - permanent facilities expected by 2004.

Fifteen Mile Falls Project - Connecticut River - NH/VT

- PG&E received letter on the need for passage at Moore and Comerford distributed to Tech Committee. They are reviewing the issue. We have not had any response yet.
- McIndoes bypass modified. Testing with hatchery smolts to be done in 2003.
- First round of grants from the Upper Connecticut River Mitigation and Enhancement Fund to be awarded January 16th. Over \$400,000 in grants likely to be awarded. Next round of applications due in October. Riverine habitat including dam removals is a funding area that needs good proposals. Fund info at: <http://www.nhcf.org/nnhpressreleases.html>)

Deerfield, Fifteen Mile Falls, Vernon, Bellows Falls, Wilder - NH/VT

PGE National Energy Group is selling all their hydros. New owner not yet announced.

FISH PASSAGE ACTIVITIES

Upstream Passage

Turners Falls Project - Connecticut River

Further evaluations of the Cabot ladder, and gatehouse ladder to be conducted in 2003. Meeting January 23 to discuss the next steps.

Downstream Passage

Deerfield River Project - Deerfield River - MA

A PIT tag study with wild smolts is planned for 2003 to evaluate outmigration timing and duration.

Mr. Steve Rideout informed the Committee that the lab had paid \$150,000 for 10 years worth of water use under an agreement with the utility based on the energy market value for that water. The original use-projections were high resulting in a credit that has paid for most of the cost of a second 10 year agreement despite increased cost. In the future (2011+), this cost will have to be built into the price of projects conducted by researchers at the lab.

Mr. Rideout also reported that the lab will be initiating a project in 2004 to investigate low head hydro development that does not require full stream barrier construction.

4. Salmon Studies Update

Mr. McMenemy provided an update on the status of the two radio-tagged salmon that were released as part of the Deerfield River fish passage study. One adult has been holding in the Deerfield River. The other was in the West River before it moved into favorable spawning habitat in the Rock River during the fall. It is presumed to have spawned before returning to the West River where it is currently located.

Though all the index site data is not in yet, it looks like the smolt production estimate will be about 10% lower than last year.

Mr. Kevin Friedland discussed a research proposal to evaluate survival and behavior of smolts in the lower river/estuarine environment. He and Mr. Tom Savoy, CTDEP, are currently tracking shortnose sturgeon in the lower Connecticut River. They will deploy detectors there this spring and could piggy-back a smolt study onto this project. Previously, Mr. Alex Haro and Mr. Steve McCormick, USGS, tracked smolts and determined that only about 25% of the tagged fish survived to reach the lower river. This project could confirm survival data for the undammed reaches of the system, and provide data on survival to the mouth of the river as well as a measure on directional movement offshore into Long Island Sound.

If this work is effective, additional projects could be considered to address survival and behavior within Long Island Sound.

The cost for the first phase in the lower river is estimated at \$50-100,000. It assumes that someone will be available to capture and fit wild smolt with tags. If the study is conducted cooperatively, CTDEP may be able to deploy the detectors and collect the data. Each tag costs \$300 and 50-100 tagged smolts are required given expected survival rates. At least 20 detection units are required at a cost of \$1,000/unit. Additional cost for a temporary hire and data management is expected.

The Committee agreed that this project could answer questions identified by the CRASC and requested that Mr. Friedland provide a written proposal in time for the CRASC meeting next Thursday.

5. Congressional Initiative Update

Ms. Janice Rowan reported that the USFWS 2003 budget has not been finalized. However, additional funds are only expected for the completion of a water treatment system at the Pittsford NFH. A formal letter to the basin's legislative delegation reiterating CRASC needs and requesting joint support for a member request in the 2004 appropriation is needed this month. The 2005 budget process is already underway. Committee assignments in the 108th Congress may not be as favorable as in the past.

6. Research Forum

The Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission Research Forum is scheduled for February 11, 2003 at the USFWS Regional Office in Hadley, MA. Ten presentations will be provided on topics ranging from zebra mussels to the effects of summer flow regimes on salmon.

7. Other Business

The Coordinator will send a sympathy card (on behalf of the Commission and Technical Committee) to the family of Mr. Dick Guertin, retired from the White River NFH, who died on January 4, 2003.

The next Technical Committee meeting is scheduled for April 2, 2003.

Attendance

Janice Rowan	USFWS
Jay McMenemy	VTFW
Steve Roy	USFS
Caleb Slater	MAFW
John Warner	USFWS
Gabe Gries	NHFG
Ken Gillette	USFWS
Bob Stira	Northeast Generation Services
Darleen Cutting	USFWS
Warren Fisher	Volunteer NH/VT
Rosemarie Fisher	Volunteer NH/VT
Steve Rideout	USGS
Phil Herzig	USFWS
Maryalice Fischer	PG&E
Mickey Novak	USFWS
Kevin Friedland	UMASS, NOAA-CMER
Duncan McInnes	NHFG
Darren Desmarais	USFWS
David MacDuffee	NMFS